

TONS OF FISH BAIT.

CATCHING MENHADEN OFF THE COAST OF NEW ENGLAND.

How Schools of Fish Are Pursued, Captured and Stowed Aboard—An Accommodating Member of the Finny Tribe Which Can Be Used in Many Ways.

Pitching his voice high the lookout at the masthead of the menhaden steamer shouts out gleefully: "A school! A school!" and immediately all is bustle and excitement on board.

"As this is a new experience to you, sir, you shall have a seat with me in my boat."

"Thank you, captain; I am only too eager to see the fun."

The crews now take their places in the seine boats, while two of the party, known as drivers, go out in advance in little thirteen foot boats to learn the direction in which the school is moving, and to mark out its size. The jolly captain—a true type of the traditional Cape Codder, square built, sturdy, genial, his face bronzed by years of exposure to sunshine and sea breezes and very intelligent—takes his place at the inside bow oar in one of the seine boats, and the mate a corresponding position in the other, and by the time they reach the school the drivers describe the movements of the fish.

They now begin throwing out the seine, each boat going in an opposite direction around the school, the drivers in the meantime splashing the water to keep the fish from escaping. Soon the boats meet, and all hands now pull at the purse line, the net and cork line. The steamer is brought alongside, and after the fish are driven well together the net is fastened to the steamer's side and they are hauled into the hold by means of a large dip net run by a donkey engine.

The next thing on the programme is to prepare the menhaden for salting, to be used as bait—for which there is great demand. This is a simple process, but to me its novelty invests it with particular interest. The head of the fish is taken in the left hand of the workman, and with a peculiarly shaped knife held in the right hand he cuts a slice, longitudinally, from each side of the body, leaving the head and vertebrae to be thrown away or occasionally to be pressed for oil. The slivers are salted and packed in barrels.

This opening act of the day's drama ended, Captain Williams invites me to accompany him into the cabin, and the skipper there entertains me with some interesting points about the fishery.

"It's queer how many different names the menhaden is known by," observes the skipper. "Fact is, it has more aliases than a veteran criminal—more nicknames than there were colors to Joseph's coat. Besides the more common name of menhaden it is known as pogy, bonnyish, mossbunker, hardhead, whitefish, bunker, oldwife, bugfish, cheboy, ellwife, alewife, fatback, greenback, wife and yellowtail shad. It's about as long as the common seaherring, but is deeper and more robust looking. Its average length is from twelve to fifteen inches. I hardly need tell you that it is valuable as a bait fish, it excells all others as such; that as a food resource it is thought to have great qualities; that its chief value is as a fertilizer, and that it is also valuable for the oil and scrap produced by cooking and pressing them."

"For illustration, here are some minutes I made in my memorandum book in regard to what was done in the year 1880, which was a fair representative season. That year the total weight of the catch was 576,000 pounds—equivalent to about 700,000,000 menhaden in number. Pretty big army, eh? Quantity of oil produced, 2,066,394 gallons, and of guano 68,904 tons, having a total value of \$2,084,841. Capital invested in steamers, etc., and their outfit and in factories, \$2,362,841. As compared with previous years, however, the yield of oil was small."

"About how long, captain, does the catching season last?"

"Well, you see, as soon as the menhaden make their appearance in the spring, vessels start in pursuit of 'em, and continue capturing 'em till they disappear in the fall. From the menhaden oil and guano factories along the southern coast of New England, New York and New Jersey shores, the fleets of steam and sail vessels begin their cruises early in May, chasing the fish along the shores and in the sounds, wherever they can be found. The vessels seldom cruise more'n ten or fifteen miles from land. The total area of the ground is estimated at 5,850 square geographical miles."

"The average steamer is about the size of this one. That is to say, some 70 tons measurement, 90 feet long, 17 feet beam, $\frac{3}{4}$ feet depth of hold and seven feet draft aft and costs \$16,000. It costs not far from \$1,000 a month for wages, fuel and provisions to run it. Like this boat, they are screw steamers and are rigged with one mast forward, which is fitted with a crane for taking in the catch. The men's quarters are in the forecastle. The fish are stored in bulk in the hold. The engine house, as you see, is astern the main hatch, with coal bunkers opening on deck each side. All of 'em have fitted to the bulwarks on either side, near the stern, cranes for the boats, and towing chocks are set in the deck on either quarter aft. The hold or tank for storing the fish is water tight. There are some steamers engaged in the fishery which are more'n 150 feet long, carrying from twenty-seven to thirty men, and cost \$30,000 and upward. Most of the steamers carry four seine boats."

"Since steamers have come into vogue the factories have greatly increased their facilities for handling large catches. The first factory could work up only a few hundred barrels a day, while now the big factories take from 3,000 to 5,000 barrels daily."—New York Herald.

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An abstract of the Annual Report made January 1, 1892, to the Board of Control of the State of New Jersey, and filed in the Department of the Secretary of State in pursuance of law.

STATEMENT JANUARY 1, 1892.

BONDS and mortgages \$156,400.00

Bank Deposits 30,000.00

U. S. and other bonds 31,994.00

Interest due and accrued 4,040.03

Office furniture, etc. 500.00

Cash in bank and office 19,765.67

LIABILITIES.

Due depositors (including interest) \$200,367.94

Surplus 17,831.06

\$217,899.00

Interest is credited to depositors on the first

days of January and July in each year for the

three and six months then ending. Deposits

made before the first business day in Jan-

uary, April, July, and October bear interest

from the first day of the month. All interest

when credited at once becomes principal and

bears interest accordingly.

JOSEPH H. DODD, Treasurer.

RESOURCES.

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